

Resources compiled by Nicole A. Cooke, for the Fake News Workshop presented at the iSchool at the University of Illinois - February 1, 2017

Media Matters for America

<http://mediamatters.org>

Media Matters for America is a Web-based, not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) progressive research and information center dedicated to comprehensively monitoring, analyzing, and correcting conservative misinformation in the U.S. media.

The News Literacy Project (NLP)

<http://www.thenewsliteracyproject.org/>

The News Literacy Project (NLP) is a nonpartisan national education nonprofit that works with educators and journalists to teach middle school and high school students how to sort fact from fiction in the digital age. NLP provides these students with the essential skills they need to become smart, active consumers of news and information and engaged, informed citizens.

Center for News Literacy

<http://www.centerfornewsliteracy.org/>

News Literacy is a curriculum developed at Stony Brook University in New York over the past decade. It is designed to help students develop critical thinking skills in order to judge the reliability and credibility of information, whether it comes via print, television or the Internet. This is a particularly important skill in the Digital Age, as everyone struggles to deal with information overload and the difficulty in determining the authenticity of reports. In the Stony Brook model, students are taught to evaluate information primarily by analyzing news as well as new forms of information that are often mistaken for journalism.

Snopes

<http://www.snopes.com/info/aboutus.asp>

The snopes.com website was founded by David Mikkelson, who lives and works in the Los Angeles area. What he began in 1995 as an expression of his interest in researching urban legends has since grown into what is widely regarded by folklorists, journalists, and laypersons alike as one of the World Wide Web's essential resources. Snopes.com is routinely included in annual "Best of the Web" lists and has been the recipient of two [Webby](#) awards. The Mikkelsons have made multiple appearances as guests on national news programs such as *20/20*, *ABC World News*, *CNN Sunday Morning*, and NPR's *All Things Considered*, and they and their work have been [profiled](#) in numerous major news publications, including *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and an April 2009 *Reader's Digest* feature ("[The Rumor Detectives](#)") published as part of that magazine's "Your America: Inspiring People and Stories" series.

Politifact

<http://www.politifact.com/>

PolitiFact is a fact-checking website that rates the accuracy of claims by elected officials and others who speak up in American politics. PolitiFact is run by editors and reporters from the *Tampa Bay Times*, an independent newspaper in Florida, as is PunditFact, a site devoted to fact-checking pundits. The PolitiFact state sites are run by news organizations that have partnered with the *Times*. The state sites and PunditFact follow the same principles as the national site.

BREAKING NEWS CONSUMER'S HANDBOOK

FAKE NEWS EDITION

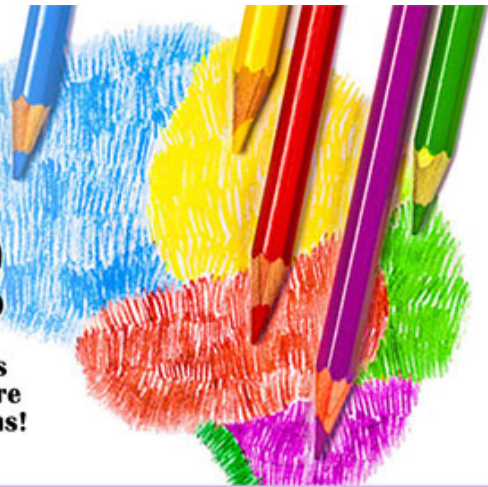
1. Big red flags for fake news: ALL CAPS, or obviously photoshopped pics.
2. A glut of pop-ups and banner ads? Good sign the story is pure clickbait.
3. Check the domain! Fake sites often add “.co” to trusted brands to steal their luster. (Think: “abcnews.com.co”)
4. If you land on an unknown site, check its “About” page. Then, Google it with the word “fake” and see what comes up.
5. If a story offers links, follow them. (Garbage leads to worse garbage.) No links, quotes, or references? Another telltale sign.
6. Verify an unlikely story by finding a reputable outlet reporting the same thing.
7. Check the date. Social media often resurrects outdated stories.
8. Read past headlines. Often they bear no resemblance to what lies beneath.
9. Photos may be misidentified and dated. Use a reverse image search engine like TinEye to see where an image *really* comes from.
10. Gut check. If a story makes you angry, it's probably designed that way.
11. Finally, if you're not sure it's true, don't share it! *Don't. Share. It.*

ON **THE MEDIA**

ONTHEMEDIA.ORG

The Ultimate Cheatsheet for Critical Thinking

Want to exercise critical thinking skills? Ask these questions whenever you discover or discuss new information. These are broad and versatile questions that have limitless applications!



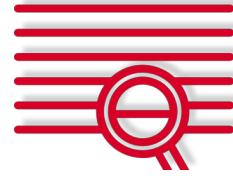
Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... benefits from this? ... is this harmful to? ... makes decisions about this? ... is most directly affected? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... have you also heard discuss this? ... would be the best person to consult? ... will be the key people in this? ... deserves recognition for this?
What	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... are the strengths/weaknesses? ... is another perspective? ... is another alternative? ... would be a counter-argument? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... is the best/worst case scenario? ... is most/least important? ... can we do to make a positive change? ... is getting in the way of our action?
Where	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... would we see this in the real world? ... are there similar concepts/situations? ... is there the most need for this? ... in the world would this be a problem? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... can we get more information? ... do we go for help with this? ... will this idea take us? ... are the areas for improvement?
When	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... is this acceptable/unacceptable? ... would this benefit our society? ... would this cause a problem? ... is the best time to take action? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... will we know we've succeeded? ... has this played a part in our history? ... can we expect this to change? ... should we ask for help with this?
Why	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... is this a problem/challenge? ... is it relevant to me/others? ... is this the best/worst scenario? ... are people influenced by this? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... should people know about this? ... has it been this way for so long? ... have we allowed this to happen? ... is there a need for this today?
How	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... is this similar to _____? ... does this disrupt things? ... do we know the truth about this? ... will we approach this safely? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... does this benefit us/others? ... does this harm us/others? ... do we see this in the future? ... can we change this for our good?

HOW TO SPOT FAKE NEWS



CONSIDER THE SOURCE

Click away from the story to investigate the site, its mission and its contact info.



READ BEYOND

Headlines can be outrageous in an effort to get clicks. What's the whole story?



CHECK THE AUTHOR

Do a quick search on the author. Are they credible? Are they real?



SUPPORTING SOURCES?

Click on those links. Determine if the info given actually supports the story.



CHECK THE DATE

Reposting old news stories doesn't mean they're relevant to current events.



IS IT A JOKE?

If it is too outlandish, it might be satire. Research the site and author to be sure.



CHECK YOUR BIASES

Consider if your own beliefs could affect your judgement.



ASK THE EXPERTS

Ask a librarian, or consult a fact-checking site.



TEN QUESTIONS FOR NEWS DETECTION

Use the questions below to assess the likelihood that a piece of information is fake news. The more red flags you circle, the more skeptical you should be!



- Gauge your emotional reaction: Is it **strang**? Are you **angry**? Are you intensely **hoping** that the information turns out to be true? YES NO
- Reflect on how you encountered this. Was it promoted on a website? Did it show up in a social media feed? Was it sent to you by someone you know?
- Consider the headline or main message:
 - Does it use **excessive punctuation(!)** or ALL CAPS for emphasis? YES NO
 - Does it make a claim about containing a secret or telling you something that "the media" doesn't want you to know? YES NO
 - Don't stop at the headline! Keep exploring.
- Is this information designed for **easy sharing**, like a meme? YES NO
- Consider the source of the information:
 - Is it a well-known source? YES NO
 - Is there a byline (an author's name) attached to this piece? YES NO
 - Go to the website's "About" section: Does the site describe itself as a "fantasy news" or "satirical news" site? YES NO
 - Does the person or organization that produced the information have any editorial standards? YES NO
 - Does the "contact us" section include an email address that matches the domain (not a Gmail or Yahoo email address)? YES NO
 - Does a quick search for the name of the website raise any suspicions? YES NO
- Does the example you're evaluating have a current date on it? YES NO
- Does the example cite a variety of sources, including official and expert sources? Does the information this example provides appear in reports from (other) news outlets? YES NO
- Does the example hyperlink to other quality sources? In other words, they haven't been altered or taken from another context? YES NO
- Can you confirm, using a reverse image search, that any images in your example are authentic (in other words, sources that haven't been altered or taken from another context)? YES NO
- If you searched for this example on a fact-checking site such as Snopes.com, FactCheck.org or PolitiFact.com, is there a fact-check that labels it as less than true? YES NO



REMEMBER:

- It is easy to clone an existing website and create fake tweets to fool people.
- Bots are extremely active on social media and are designed to dominate conversations and spread propaganda.
- Fake news and other misinformation often use a real image from an unrelated event.
- Debunk examples of misinformation whenever you see them. It's good for democracy!